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A Defence of the Blessed Trinity. By
Isaac Barrow. D.D.

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A
BRIEF STATE
OF THE
Socinian Controversy.
Concerning a
TRINITY in UNITY.

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College, in Cambridge.*

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A
BRIEF STATE
OF THE
Socinian Controversy.

* **T**He Sacred Trinity
may be consider-
ed, either as it is
in it self, wrapt up in unex-
plicable Folds of Mystery;
or, as it hath discovered it
self, operating in wonder-
ful Methods of Grace to-
wards us.

A 2

As

* *V. Defence of the B. Trinity, p. 9.*

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As it is in it self, 'tis an Object too bright and dazling for our weak Eye to fasten upon; an Abyſs too deep for our ſhort Reason to fathom. I can only ſay, That we are ſo bound to mind it, as to exerciſe our Faith, and expreſs our Humility, in willingly believing, in ſubmiſſively adoring thoſe high Myſteries, which are revealed in the Holy Oracles concerning it; by that Spirit it ſelf, *which ſearcheth the Depths of God,* and by that Only Son of God, who reſiding in his Father's Boſom, hath thence brought them forth, and *Expounded them* to us, ſo far as was fit for our Capacity and

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and use. And the Lectures
so read by the Eternal Wis-
dom of God, the Propositions
uttered by the Mouth of
Truth it self, we are obliged
with a Docile Ear, and a
Credulous Heart, to enter-
tain.

That there is One Divine
Nature or Essence, common
unto Three Persons, incompre-
hensibly United, and ineffably
Distinguished; united in Es-
sential Attributes, distinguish-
ed by peculiar Idioms and Re-
lations; all equally Infinite in
every Divine Perfection, each
different from other in Order
and Manner of Subsistence;
that there is a mutual inexist-
ence of One in All, and All
in One; a Communication

§ 1. In Unity of Substance
without any Depreciation or De-
valuation in the Communication;
in Eternal Generation, and
in Eternal Procession without
Precedence or Succession, with-
out proper Causality or Depen-
dence; A Father imparting
his own, and the Son receiving
his Father's Life, and a Spirit
issuing from both, without any
Division or Multiplication of
Essence; These are Notions
which may well puzzle our
Reason, in conceiving how
they agree, but should not
tether our Faith, in assent-
ing that they are true. Up-
on which we should medi-
tate, not with hope to com-
prehend, but with disposi-
tion to admire, veiling our
Faces in the Presence, and
prostrating our Reason at
the

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the Feet of Wisdom so far
transcending us.

There be those, who because they cannot untie, dare to cut in sunder these Sacred Knots. Who, because they cannot fully conceive it, dare flatly to deny them. Who, instead of confessing their own Infirmary, do charge the plain Doctrines and Assertions of Holy Scripture with Impossibility. Others seem to think, they can demonstrate these Mysteries by Arguments grounded upon Principles of Natural Light, and express it by Similitudes derived from common Experience. To repress the Presumption of the former, and to restrain the

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the Curiosity of the latter ;
the following Considera-
tion (improved by your
Thoughts) may perhaps
somewhat conduce.

We may consider, *That*
our Reason is no competent or
capable Judge concerning Pro-
positions of this Nature. 'Tis
not sufficient, nor was ever
designed to sound such
Depths ; to descry the Ra-
dical Principles of all Be-
ing ; to reach the extream
Possibilities of Things.

Such an Intellectual Ca-
pacity is vouchsafed to us,
as doth suit to our Degree
(the lowest Rank of Intel-
ligent Creatures) as be-
cometh our Station in this
inferior

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inferior Part of the World; as may qualify us to discharge the petty Businesses committed to our Management, and the facile Duties incumbent on us. But to know, *What God is; How he subsisteth; what he can; what he should do;* by our natural Perspicacity, or by any means we can use, farther than he pleaseth to reveal, doth not suit to the Meanness of our Condition, or the Narrowness of our Capacity. These really are the most elevated Sublimities, and the abstrusest Subtilities that are, or can be in the nature of things. He that can penetrate them, may erect his Tribunal any where in the World, and

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pretend justly that nothing in Heaven or Earth is exempted from his Judgment.

But in truth, how unfit our Reason is to exercise such Universal Jurisdiction, we may discern by comparing it to our Sense. It is obvious, that many Beasts do (by advantage of a finer Sense) See, Hear, Smell things imperceptible to us. And were it not very unreasonable to conclude, that such things do not exist, or are in themselves altogether insensible, because they do not all appear to us? Is it not evident, that we ought to impute their Imperceptibility (respecting us)

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us) to the defect of our Sense, to its Dullness and Grossness, in regard to the Subtilty of those Objects? Even so may Propositions in themselves, and in regard to the Capacity of higher Understandings; (for there are gradual Differences in Understanding, as well as in Sense) be true and very intelligible; which to our inferior Reason seem unintelligible, or repugnant to the Preconceptions, with which our Soul is imbued: And our not discerning those Truths, may argue the Blindness and Weakness of our Understanding, not any Fault or Inconsistency in the Things themselves. Nor should it cause us any
wise

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wise to distrust them, if they come recommended to our Belief by competent Authority.

P, 21. It cannot be reasonable out of Principles drawn from ordinary Experience, about these most low and imperfect Things to collect; that there can be no other kind of *Unions*, of *Distinctions*, of *Generations*, of *Processions*, than such as our own gross Sense doth represent to us. Reason it self more forcibly doth oblige us to think, that to sublimer Beings there do pertain *Modes of Existence* and *Action*, *Unions* and *Distinctions*, *Influences* and *Emanations* of a more high and

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and perfect Kind: Such as our coarse Apprehension cannot adequate, nor our rude Language express: Which we perhaps, have no Faculty subtile enough to conceive distinctly, nor can attain any congruous Principles, from which to Discourse solidly about them.

No Words, perhaps, which we do use to signify our Conceptions

Id. on the Creed, p. 337.

about these Material and Inferiour Things, will perfectly and adequately suit to a Mystery, so much remote from the common Objects of our Knowledge, so far transcending our Capacity. Shall we then, who cannot pierce into the Nature of a Peble;

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V. Defense of the B. Trinity. p. 16. Peble ; that cannot apprehend how a Mushroom doth grow ; that are baffled in our Philosophy about a Gnat or a Worm , debate and decide (beyond what is taught us from above) concerning the precise manner of Divine Essence, Subsistence, or Generation ? I do (saith St. Chrysostom) eat Meats , but how they are divided into Phlegm , into Blood , into Juice , into Choler , I am ignorant. These things which every day we see and taste , we do not know ; and are we curious about the Essence of God ?

P. 55. • Wherefore do we stretch our Judgment

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ment beyond its Limits, as to Things so infinitely exceeding it? Why do we suffer our Reason to be Pragmatical, unjustly Invading the Office not belonging thereto; intruding into Things which it hath not seen, Col. ii. 18. nor can comprehend; those *Secret Things*, which belong to the Lord our God, Deut. xix. 29. and the comprehension whereof he hath reserved unto himself?

These Considerations may suffice in some manner, to shew, that St. Chrysostom had reason to exclaim so much against the *Madness*, as he styleth it, of those, who are busily Curious in Speculation about the *Essence of God*; daring

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ring to subject Divine Myste-
ries to their own Ratiocinati-
ons. That St. Basil's Ad-
vice was wholsom, *not to be*
meddlesom about things, about
which Holy Scripture is silent,

† Zeno Ve-
ronens.

That † another
Ancient Writer
did say no less
prettily, than truly, that in
these Matters *curiositas reum*
facit, non peritum; we may
easilier incur blame, than
attain Skill by nice Enquiry
into them. That many of
the Fathers do with great
Wisdom dislike and dissuade
the searching τὸ πᾶς, the
manner of Things being
true or possible, as a suspi-
cions Mark, or a dangerous
Motive of Infidelity. That
St. Paul's Rules, Rom. xii. 3.

Q. 1. 1. 1.

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οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν ἐκείνῳ, τοῦ εἶναι
σοφὸν ὥστε καὶ νηφάλιον τοῦ εἶναι
κατατοῦτον; καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν
νόμος ὁ ἀποστόλου, μὴ τοῦ ἐκ-
καταλέγειν ὅτιον ὅτιον ὅτιον
of Scripture, 1 Cor. iv. 6. are
in this Case most especially
to be heeded. That, ac-
cording to St. Peter's Ad-
monition, we should as
new-born Babies
(unprepossess'd 1 Pet. ii. 2.
with any Noti- Entirely.
ons or Fancies of our own)
long for, and greedily suck in
the sincere milk of the Word;
not diluting it with baser
Liquors of Humane Device.
That where God doth in-
terpose his definitive Sen-
tence, our Reason hath no-
thing to do but to attend
and submit. No Right to
Vote,

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Vote, no Licence to Debate the Matter. Its Duty is to listen and approve whatever God speaketh, to read and subscribe to whatever he writeth. At least in any case it should be mute, or ready to follow Job, saying, *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, Job xl. 4.*

In fine; The Testimony of God, with a sufficient clearness represented to the Capacity of an Honest and Docile Mind (void of all partial Respects, and clear from all sorts of Prejudice; loving Truth, and forward to entertain it; abhorring to wrest or wrack Things,
to

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to use any Fraud or Violence upon any Principle, or Ground of Truth) the Testimony of God, I say, so revealed, whatever Exception, our shallow Reason can thrust in, should absolutely convince our Judgment, and constrain our Faith.

If the Holy Scripture teacheth us plainly, and frequently doth inculcate upon us (that which also the uniform Course of Nature, and the peaceable Government of the World doth also speak) That there is but One True God. If it as manifestly doth ascribe to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, the same August Names,

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Names, the same Peculiar Characters, the same Divine Attributes (essential to the Deity) the same Superlatively admirable Operations of Creation and Providence: If it also doth prescribe to them, the same Supreme Honours, Services, Praises and Acknowledgments to be paid unto them All; this may be abundantly enough to satisfy our Minds, to stop our Mouths, to smother all Doubt and Dispute about this High and Holy Mystery.

It was exceeding Goodness in God, that he would condescend so far to instruct us; to disclose so Noble a Truth unto us; to enrich our Minds with that

ὁ πᾶς

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ὁρῶντος τὰς γνάσεις, that most excellent Knowledge of himself. And it would be no small Ingratitude and Unworthiness in us, any wise to suspect his Word, or pervert his Meaning; any wise to subject his Venerable Oracles to our rude Canvasses and Cavils.

In fine; The proper Employment of our Mind about these Mysteries, is not to search and speculate about them, to Discourse flippantly and boldly about them; but with a pious Credulity to embrace them, with all humble Respect to Adore them.

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